

Q: Did you seek this assignment, knowing that you would then participate in World War II as an Armored officer rather than an Engineer?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: So, actually your initial contact with armor was when you were moved out of Alaska. Well, General Somervell actually pulled you out then. Was that tantamount to a relief of the job?

A: Yes, it was. He asked General Devers [Jacob L. Devers, USMA 1909], who was then head of the Armored Force, if he'd take me. He said yes. Devers and I became great friends. He was an instructor when I was a cadet, but I didn't know him then particularly. But later he became a great friend and he was a great man. He's still alive [died 15 October 1979]. He really was the father of the Armored Force. They talk about Chaffee [Adna R. Chaffee, Jr., USMA 1906] and the rest of them, but they were more theorists. Chaffee was a cavalryman heart and soul. He came out and gave us a lecture on armor, but he talked more about horses than he did about armor.

### *Fort Riley*

Q: So, again, this was another one of those chance happenings that turned out for the best. So, when you left Alaska and went down to Knox, it was with the distinct intent to go into armor.

A: Yes, I think so.

Q: It seemed to turn out quite well.

A: Eventually it did.

Q: Then when you went to Fort Riley, you went there and joined the 9th Division and it was just being formed at that time?

A: It was being formed out of the 2d and 14th Cavalries plus this 3d Artillery. We had the 9th Engineers. They were all part of the old 2d

Cavalry Division which had been disbanded. It was reorganized and went to the border; and they turned these two regiments over, and the rest of the Armored Force became all white after that.

Q: Now, what was your initial assignment there? Did you initially take the combat command?

A: I had a combat command. There were two brigadier. They changed its organization. There were two brigadier and a major general. It had two. A and B were the active combat commands and R was the reserve command. *Brigadier General and Mrs. (Nettie) Hoge, Fort Riley, Kansas, 1943.* But they were all interchangeable. You could use any one of them and take one out and rest it or use it in reserve or anything else.



Q: Was the reserve command also commanded by a brigadier general?

A: No, it was a colonel. Later, when they organized the armor, they took away the brigadier general, one of the brigadiers, and they took away the artillery commander who was a brigadier. They busted it down to—one brigadier and one major general in the division after that. And the strength of the division was cut greatly. These later regiments were much lighter and less in strength. I think the strength of the armored division dropped from about 16,000 or 17,000 down to about 8,000 or 10,000.

Q: Well, in your combat command, did you have any support elements assigned or were they all part of division headquarters or the division base?

A: We didn't have any.

Q: You had strictly maneuver battalions within—

A: We had maneuver battalions—we had headquarters, but all the other support came from the division.

Q: You had Combat Command B. Were you assigned that initially at Fort Riley during the training and went with it into Europe? Who had A at that time, sir?

A: “Honk” Allen [Brigadier General Frank A. Allen, Jr.] had it first, and then when they had the invasion he had A. He was a brigadier at that time. That was when we still had the heavy division, and he went with Patton on the landing in Africa. He'd known Patton. I don't know whether you've ever heard of Allen or not. He didn't do very well as—well, I don't know whether he would have or not. He finally became a public relations man. He got in terribly bad by giving prewarning to the newspaper people about the armistice or the surrender, and he was practically court-martialed for that. But then it was a big scandal in that time. But he went off with that and he still stayed a brigadier. As I say, he went over in public relations. He was more of a newspaper man.

Q: What was the make-up of the troops at that time? Were they mostly draftees that were fresh? Brought in from the draft?

A: Well, they were coming in all that time. I guess they were draftees.

Q: Did you have any particular problems?

A: The nucleus of this was people who were already there from these old cavalry regiments and the others.

Q: Which gave you a cadre for training.

A: We had a cadre, but we were constantly being stripped of men because of these various projects that they had coming along. One was sending people to the Air Corps and they got to select. By our qualifications we were supposed to have people with IQs of 105. Hell, we got down to 85. They went through us and stripped us of all these men with intelligence for the Air Corps, and they had some scheme that came out to train a lot of students and send them off to special schools, civilian schools. I don't know whatever came of that, and I don't think it ever worked out. But they stripped us of these men, and there were officer training camps that were being organized. They took all of our top men. So, we were pretty hard up to get anybody who had an IQ of 105. We had some.

Q: Did you have any particular problems in training the troops? Were they pretty well charged up knowing they were going to Europe?

A: They were all right. There was no trouble about that with our officer personnel. We had very few regular officers, and we lost a number of those. We were disappointed. I remember one group we had. We had three that were battalion commanders or maybe a regimental commander who had gotten in trouble. Some of them were drunks and one of them was a drunk and one of them ran around with an officer's wife and went AWOL.

We didn't have [any quality officers]. Now the first four or five armored divisions [that] were organized all had training at Benning and the Artillery School and what not—they were trained back then. They were partially trained and [had] very high quality officers. But when we got along, we had to make our own. We had that trouble in the 9th Armored all along. When I lost an officer, particularly a battalion commander or a company commander, I didn't have anybody to replace them. Sometimes I'd send back and get somebody else, and they wouldn't be sufficient, and noncoms were the best we had. The younger officers were all right. They were just new as lieutenants, but when we got to captain and a battalion commander, they were almost irreplaceable. I had some poor ones, too. When I got with the 4th Armored, I found an entirely different situation. When I got with the 4th Armored Division, when there was a wounded or killed battalion commander, I always had a replacement right behind him. But with the 9th Armored, we didn't have

any of that, and I'd go back to division headquarters and ask for somebody else. I remember at Remagen getting clear down to nothing and I went back to division headquarters. Well, they said they had a captain there in the ordnance who would be perfectly willing to come up. The captain lasted a day. He went back in an ambulance, wounded. So, I lost him. We were down to the point where the companies were commanded by a brave bunch of lieutenants just out of these training camps or [by] noncoms.

Q: What did you do for battalion commanders? When you lost a battalion commander, did you put in a major?

A: Or a captain. I had to put them in several times. I had to baby them all along and watch over them all the time, keep them going. I got several cases like that. I had problems one or two times—tremendous. One of them was when we got the bridge at Remagen. I had waited there to be sure we had the bridge. I had received orders to do something else. I knew they didn't know I had the bridge. I wanted to be sure that we got a battalion guarding the bridge over on the other side. I went back to division headquarters to tell them. When I went back I met General Leonard [John W. Leonard, USMA 1915] at my headquarters. He arrived just about the same time I did and I told him. And while I was standing there talking to him, the infantry battalion commander showed up. He was the man that was supposed to be commanding the infantry battalion across the river. I said, "What n the hell are you doing here?" He said, "I came back to get supplies. " I had to relieve him.

Q: I'll get off the track a little bit. While on that trip before you met General Leonard—in the book written by the captain in General S. L. A. Marshall's historical section, Ken Hechler, he mentions that on a trip going back to your division headquarters, your aide in the back seat of the jeep was shot and killed by a sniper?

A: No, my aide was killed before then. I had been without an aide since then. The aide was killed about a week before. Before we got to the Rhine [on 4 March while General Hoge was driving into Bodenheim].

Q: I'll go over that later when we get up to it. From your comments now and from the material I've been able to find—and from at least one officer who thinks a great deal more of you for it—you obviously did not seek publicity and didn't much give a damn about it. You reinforced that at the time. Well, back on the training before you took the combat command, was there any other headquarters? You had no intermediate subordinates between you and your battalions in the combat command. Is that correct?

A: No, I had nobody. I had a headquarters company, and I had an S-3—an S-4 in my staff.

Q: What was the grade level of your staff-lieutenant colonels or majors?

A: Majors, and eventually one of them got to be a lieutenant colonel. He was a crackerjack.

Q: How many maneuver battalions did you have? Five?

A: Well, it changed. We could have three. There was a mixture of armor and infantry. Actually we didn't have enough of the latter to operate efficiently. We didn't have enough infantry to take over some of the things. Armor should not be slowed down by taking these places. I mean by going in and occupying and cleaning out. The thing to do is to rush the place and overcome the Germans. Then they'd hole up in the houses. Then you'd have to take infantry in and clean them out.

Q: And let the armor move on,

A: Armor had to move. Armor is no good standing still. Its forte is to move, move and shoot, the most important part is the moving. Armor—I'm talking about armor now—is not the big important thing. No. They did put a lot of armor on and it's all right to have. The best thing to have is a good gun that will penetrate and have maneuverability. It's got to be mobile. It's got to move fast.

Q: Then you'd be of the school of a lighter, faster, more maneuverable vehicle with a heavier gun rather than the heavy armament?

A: Well, you couldn't do too much with the heavy armor. We later got it after the war when I was back in Germany. Later there were tanks that were absolutely unusable. They were gas hogs. You would almost have to have a pipeline behind to keep them supplied. They were far too heavy.

Q: That debate is still going on. I guess it always will with the demise of the MBT-70 and now the XM803, or whatever the new designation of the main battle tank is?

A: I haven't followed that up, but I know that the Patton was a pretty good tank. But they began to add more armor to it and they got the thing too heavy and slowed it up and then the gas consumption was too great. The first Patton—not the Patton tank—

Q: The Sherman?

A: Yes, the Sherman was a good tank and it could go about 100 miles on a tankful of gas. But later we got down to the point where we couldn't go 25 miles. Later on they developed them so heavy and they were such gas consumers. Of course, we should have had diesel. We did in the beginning and the Marine Corps or somebody got all the diesel engines. I think it was the Marines, and we had to go back to gasoline engines which were not as economical as the diesel. The diesel [engines] were good. I'm not a technician, and I know very little about them except supplying them and then moving and handling them. I can do that, but I don't know the technique and all that. But I do know they got them too damned heavy, and then they got worried about the amount of armor. Of course, some of those—I've seen a tank shot right straight through. Armor piercing, go in one side, come right out the other.

Q: I guess that debate will go on as long as we have armor. Which way it should go. Well, how long did you train at Fort Riley?

A: We trained-then we went out to the desert. We left Fort Riley on about the 1st of June, as I remember, and went to the desert. It's a desert training center. We spent three or four months. That was when they cut the division down in size and they relieved [some of us]. They only left one brigadier general, and they knocked out all the artillery and the Engineer brigadier and what not. It was left entirely to cavalry and infantry. I was at that time made available to the Engineers. I went with the amphibious force.

Q: Your term "relief" there is just reassignment?

A: Reassigned, but that was a result of reduction in the number of general officers and the cutting down of the size of the division. As I say, they cleaned out the artillerymen who were commanding. First of all, they took the Engineers out who were brigadier generals and then they made them available to the Engineers. Then they took out the artillerymen. So, they had left only the infantry and the cavalrymen generally-the commanders. That was the time they reduced it down to one brigadier.

Q: Then you went down to Camp Gordon Johnston, Florida, I believe, to the 4th Engineer Special Brigade.

A: I think it was the—it was the 4th. I was down there learning something about that. I had never been with the amphibious force, and I had only been there a few weeks when my orders were changed and I was ordered to London to organize and command the 5th [Engineer Special] Brigade. Later I was added to the 6th Brigade.

Q: Were you only at Camp Gordon Johnston in October and November 1943?

### *European Theater of Operation*

A: I got over to England in November. I was supposed to go by way of Africa, but I had to stop to get the yellow fever shots for some reason and then after I got them I had to sit around for a couple of weeks and then they decided to send me up by way of Iceland. So, I had to take off by myself and head up north and get a plane going out of New York.